

ORIGIN OF THE FIRE IS A MYSTERY

SUSPECT IN FIERCE FURY OVER THE DOOMED CITY

Efforts of Firemen and Resort to Dynamite
Futile to Stay Progress of Ruin.

BALTIMORE, Feb. 8.—The exact origin of the great fire is not known, and perhaps never will be definitely ascertained. At this time it is only known that the blaze started in the big wholesale dry goods house of John E. Hurst & Co., at the corner of German Street and Hopkins Place. It is supposed that the fire originated in the basement of that structure.

It was ten minutes before 11 o'clock yesterday morning when the automatic fire alarm box in this building rang in the alarm. The building is in the heart of the wholesale section, and as is usual on Sundays there was a comparatively small number of people in the vicinity.

Hundreds of Baltimoreans were attending divine services in the churches, and thousands of others were at their homes, entirely ignorant and unmindful of the terrible disaster to their city and themselves which was impending. The first alarm caused only the ordinary amount of excitement as the engines, trucks and hose carts hurried to the scene. The clanging of their bells did not for the moment seriously disturb the Sabbath solemnity.

Streets Were Deserted.

Only those within the immediate neighborhood were at that time in any way disturbed. It was only a Sunday morning fire, and people in the residence portion of the city had little concern, for they had no way of knowing of the great pall which hung over them, that within a few hours the great commercial heart of the city of Baltimore would be lying in ruins, destroyed by the greatest conflagration since the Chicago disaster of 1871, which has never visited an American municipality.

The church bells continued to ring, calling the people to religious service, almost as if it were in unison with the measured strokes of the fire bells, and out of tune with the harrowing clanging of the gongs on the pumping engines as they rushed in response to the calls which came in thick and fast following the signal of fire in the Hurst building.

Engine No. 12 and truck No. 2, which have their stations at a few blocks away from the scene of the incipient conflagration, were the first to reach the corner of German Street and Hopkins Place. Even before they had gotten into place and could get a stream of water playing upon the rapidly spreading flames, there was heard a gigantic explosion, which shook the big structures for blocks around, and in a measure awoke the city from its Sabbath lethargy. Everyone at the scene then knew by the sound of the explosion that the fire in the basement of the Hurst structure which was used to feed the gasoline engine in the building had caught fire and exploded. Instantly the flames shot upward, reaching every part of the structure. The explosion was the most part of highly combustible material, was devoured like tissue paper in a roaring furnace, while the flames licked up the woodwork like tinder.

Engulfed Fire Apparatus.

Following the explosion the walls swayed and shook and in an instant with terrific crash and roar fell almost before a stream of water could be gotten to play upon the burning building. Engine No. 15 and truck No. 2 were buried beneath the debris, but fortunately the fire fighters were able to make good their escape. So close were they to danger that the horses which had been hitched to the engine and truck had their hair singed.

As the walls fell a shower of fiery embers and sparks flew upward and the whole building presented the spectacle of a roaring furnace. The heat was so intense as to interfere with the operations of the firemen, who were by reason of the loss of the first engine to reach the scene, temporarily disabled, and the blaze was enabled thus to get a good headway before it was possible even to moisten the burning embers with a spray of water.

As the walls of the Hurst building fell the flames were immediately communicated to the surrounding buildings on each of the three other corners. The building occupied by the Daniel Miller Company, and the structure occupied by R. M. Sutton & Co., immediately adjoining the Hurst property, were the first to catch fire after the destruction of the Hurst Building, which was so sudden that it was deemed almost before anyone had time to realize what was happening.

Across Narrow Streets.

The streets being narrow the flames easily leaped across German Street, and the still narrower thoroughfare known as Hopkins Place to the building of the Merchant Manufacturing Association, the bank on the opposite corner, and the little old frame saloon, almost a century old, on the corner of the street.

In less time, it is estimated, than it would take to write it all four corners were a mass of seething flames. The little saloon was devoured by the flames in mere passing, leaping as they did to the larger and more stately structure, as if they were bent upon doing as little damage in their wild fury of devastation and destruction. It all happened in such an incredibly short space of time that the entire city seemed demoralized before it was just then only in its beginning.

Alarms were sent in in rapid succession, and in a short time every fire fighting machine in the city was in service, and every man in the department was exerting every effort to stay the fury of the flames, but with scarcely anything of success. The fire fighters were utterly powerless. The more water poured upon the roaring flames the more they seemed to laugh at their freedom, and their roar mocked all attempts to stay their devastation.

Flames Everywhere.

East, west, north, in all directions the flames spread. A few minutes after the fire started Chief Engineer Horton, of the Baltimore department, was seriously injured by an electric trolley wire at the corner of Liberty and Baltimore Streets, and had to be carried to his home and placed in bed. The city was thus deprived of its valuable services in directing operations, and his place was taken by District

Chief Emrich. No management, no matter how astute, could, however, do anything which would retard the progress of the work of destruction, so rapidly did it go on, laying low first one and then another structure, one of one and two stories, and others reaching their lofty heads to the sky. Tier upon tier was enveloped in roaring flames and smoke, and buildings which it took months to rear were in as many minutes leveled to the ground in some instances, so that scarce one brick or stone remained upon another.

In less than an hour, in fact, before noon, half a dozen city blocks were aflame, and the buildings in each one of them laid low. The firemen fought with great bravery against terrific odds, only to see their efforts, and more especially their good results. The streams of water seemed to be like pouring oil upon the flames instead of a dampening fluid calculated to extinguish fire.

Across the narrow streets, carried by a strong wind, the flames leaped, spreading in all directions, but more especially and with greater rapidity and greater devastation in the direction of the prevailing wind. As if bent upon joining forces with that deadly agent of destruction—fire—that other element of nature—wind—seemed to shift now in this direction, now in that, to almost all points of the compass, so as to make it possible for buildings on all sides of the burning district to get into the pathway of the flames.

The City Aroused.

By this time the entire city was thoroughly aroused, and excitement ran high. The first to rush to the scene of the conflagration, were those who happened to be, at 11 o'clock, in the downtown section. They were followed a short time afterward by the worshippers in the churches downtown, in which there were many in the various congregations who left before the close of the services and hurried to the scene.

By the time the services were concluded the hundreds which the churches contained, all arrayed in their Sunday best, were congregated about the burned district. These were supplemented by thousands who came downtown from their homes as soon as apprised of the terrible conflagration and choked the narrow streets and passageways with a throng of humanity, all powerless to do anything which would in any way tend to lessen the disaster.

As the flames spread, devouring one structure after another, the crowds were gradually beaten back, but the police had great difficulty in keeping them from preventing serious loss of life. So far as is reported at this time, not more than two or three persons have lost their lives, which is considered remarkable for such enormous destruction of property. A number of firemen were more or less injured in their efforts. Many of them who have heroically working now more than twenty-four hours have been without food for that time, and, of course, all have been entirely without rest, and what is worse, their work must continue unabated for days to come in extinguishing the smoldering embers after the fire is under control.

Help From Washington.

Shortly after noon it became apparent that the local firemen and the Baltimore fire-fighting force were entirely inadequate to handle the situation, and that the entire business section of the city was doomed to destruction. Then it was that Mayor McLane decided to summon assistance from the outside to assist in the work of staying the fury of the fire. All of the surrounding towns were apprised of the situation and asked to contribute whatever help it was within their power to render.

A dispatch was sent to Washington also calling for help. The message found Commander Macfarland in church, but he quickly realized the enormity of the disaster which must oblige Baltimore to send to Washington for help, and accordingly gave direction that two engines with necessary equipment and crews be dispatched at once to the stricken city. Arrangements were made quickly for a special train carrying the Baltimore and Ohio, Chief Bail and Fire Marshal Sidney Bieber were directed to accompany the engines and apparatus.

Engines From Elsewhere.

Help was also asked for from Wilmington, Philadelphia, Camden, and even as far away as New York, and to each request a prompt response was made, and an incredible short time after the message from Mayor McLane, the chief executives of these cities had been received the fire fighters were on their way to help Baltimore. During the height of the conflagration the demand for water became so great that it was necessary for some of the engines to use salt water, which, in some instances, will doubtless prove of great damage to them. It was the only way, however, that streams could be gotten to play upon certain sections of the burning district. Accordingly the pumps were set at work in the pathway of the bay along the wharves and many streams of the saline fluid were poured upon the seething flames.

Resorted to Dynamite.

As the conflagration spread apace with unabated fury, it soon became apparent that its progress could only be impeded by resorting to the use of dynamite. To blow up huge structures which stood in the pathway of the flames in order to create an open space about the burning district and force the fire to die out by reason of having nothing more to feed upon, the idea being to confine the flames in the smallest possible area in order that it might sooner be gotten under control.

It required but little more than the suggestion to cause the officials of the city to resort to action. The situation was such that extreme measures must be sought to prevent absolute annihilation of the city. It was decided to make a number of buildings, it seemed almost like wanton destruction—it would have been wanton destruction under any other circumstances—to place a load

MAP SHOWING FIRE-SWEPT DISTRICT.



The area limited by the dots shows the extent of the fire up to last evening.

The area marked by the crosses shows the additional district swept last night and today.

Buildings Laid Low.

With a terrific roar, then almost instantly thereafter an awful upshot, followed immediately by a second crash and crumbling of walls, many an imposing edifice was laid to waste, and where a few minutes before had stood a costly office or mercantile building, after the application of dynamite, the fuse, and the torch, a moment later lay in ruins, a heap of brick, mortar, and stone. But even this heroic course served only for the time being to stay the fury of the flames. In many instances the dynamiting of buildings was done too late, for the reason that officials hesitate with dread to raise buildings which should the wind shift might possibly be saved. Again, at places the opening created by the razing of these structures by dynamite was not sufficiently large to prevent the flames in their fury from leaping over these wrecked structures and reaching others which had been left standing. Then it was necessary to lay others low, but all apparently had little effect. The dynamiting of buildings only served to destroy them before the flames reached them, and in many instances only a short time before the flames would have reached them.

Lull in the Storm.

By the middle of the afternoon the fire seemed to be under control, but this was a false impression. Extra editions of the newspapers announced that the fire was probably under control at 3 o'clock. They then estimated the total loss between \$15,000,000 and \$20,000,000, but later developments have proven how erroneous was the statement. Those figures scarce amount to one-tenth of the damage.

When the fire was thought to be under control, the wind arose and the flame broke forth anew in half a dozen places, and continued to burn with even greater fury than before. It was found necessary to call for further help from nearby cities, and to blast additional structures.

Leaped Over Buildings.

From German Street the fire spread rapidly to Lombard Street, leaping from building to building, and sometimes skipping two or three buildings, and in this way a block would become ignited in a remarkably short space of time. At Lombard Street the fire paused for some time and the large building of Guggenheimer, Weil & Co. stood for a time apparently undamaged. It was evidently doomed, however, and the arrangements were made for dynamiting it in order to save the Lloyds & Jackson building, just across Lombard Street.

The Guggenheimer, Weil & Co. building suddenly burst into flame, and in a very short time the floors began falling in with a crash, a heavy fire-grappling machinery weighing many tons, causing a detonation that made many think the place had really been dynamited. The walls quickly followed the floors, and the Jackson building was saved after a hard struggle. A number of the other buildings on the south side of Lombard Street became ignited, however, and both sides of that street, from Liberty to Charles, were practically ruined, the houses on the north side being completely destroyed, and those on the south side, with the exception of the Jackson building, badly damaged.

Flames Flew East.

Meantime the flames had swept through the block to the east and quickly began the destruction of the buildings on the west side of Sharp Street. With scarcely a pause they jumped over the east side of Sharp Street, and the large row of buildings on that side of the street began to crackle and burn.

Hardly had a portion of the fire apparatus been shifted to meet the new point threatened when the fire was sweeping madly across to the West side of Hanover Street, and here the scene was repeated. Almost before the firemen realized the fact the buildings on the east side of Hanover Street were blazing.

A Magnificent Scene.

At this time the scene in this portion of the burning district was magnificent in its spectacular grandeur. Looking up Hanover Street to Baltimore nothing but a seething, roaring mass of flames, mingled with dense smoke, could be seen. Baltimore Street was itself a roaring furnace, and on every side were flying cinders. The roar of the flames was broken at frequent intervals by the

crash of falling walls, and now and again the detonation of some explosion sounded above the other noises.

After crossing Hanover Street there was little to oppose the onrushing flames and the blaze continued its destructive course without a check to Charles Street. Prior to this time there had been much talk of dynamiting the material was on the ground, and Roy C. Laferty, the Government expert, who had come from Washington especially to take charge of the work of dynamiting the buildings, was on the ground with his apparatus in readiness.

Beyond All Control.

By this time it was thoroughly realized that the flames were completely beyond control and only desperate measures could be expected to relieve the situation. In this street City Engineer Fendall and Mr. Laferty laid a charge in the building adjoining Armstrong, Cator & Co.'s on the west and set it off. The building fell with a crash, but the blazing ruins ignited the Armstrong building and the situation was if anything, made worse.

Armstrong, Cator & Co.'s Building burned rapidly. A large charge of dynamite was set off in it, but the structure failed to collapse, and the idea of destroying it with dynamite was abandoned.

The flames by this time were raging fiercely all along German Street to Charles, and it was then that Mr. Laferty set off six charges of dynamite, each charge containing 100 pounds, in the building at the southwest corner of Charles and German Streets. The tremendous force of the explosions tore out the massive granite columns that supported the building and left it with apparently almost no support, but the walls failed to collapse until the flames had crossed Charles Street and were eating into the block between Charles and Light Streets.

Carrollton Burns.

The fire had meantime been communicated to the row of buildings on South Charles Street, between German and Lombard Streets, and all those places, occupied principally by wholesale produce and grain dealers, were in flames. Shortly before midnight the Carrollton Hotel was in flames and the fire was sweeping toward Calvert Street with irresistible fury.

The incredibly short time it had succeeded in checking the flames at Lombard Street, and as the wind was blowing from the northwest there was no danger of its spreading farther in that direction. The western limit had also been reached at Howard Street, and the danger was now to the east and south.

The progress of the flames toward the north had in the meantime been so rapid as to be simply appalling. From structure to structure they flew, licking up the massive buildings as if they were composed of paper. In the block between German and Baltimore Streets they leaped along, and almost before it could be realized the buildings along Baltimore Street were blazing from roof to basement.

Millions in Ruins.

For a time it was hoped the fire could be kept from crossing to the north side of Baltimore Street, and the firemen made a desperate effort to prevent it. The effort was useless, however, and soon the tall, narrow building of Mullin's Hotel began to dart out tongues of flame from several stories and in a few minutes the entire building was an immense flaming tower. The explosion was a paucity to structure they flew, licking up the massive buildings as if they were composed of paper. In the block between German and Baltimore Streets they leaped along, and almost before it could be realized the buildings along Baltimore Street were blazing from roof to basement.

HIS ACTIONS SUSPICIOUS.

BALTIMORE, Feb. 8.—Frank Sullivan, whom the police give a bad record, was sent by Deputy Marshal Manning to the stationhouse because of his suspicious actions near the Federal Savings Bank.

Equitable Doomed.

In a desperate effort to prevent the fire from going further to the east, building after building was dynamited in this block, but it was all of no avail, and the fire proceeded steadily onward. The "Daily Record" building was soon in flames, and not many minutes later the fire had leaped over St. Paul Street and the lofty, massive Calvert Building began to emit smoke and flame. The Equitable Building, just over a narrow alley, quickly followed, and these two immense buildings gave forth a glare that lighted the city for miles around.

It was thought that the fire could be prevented from crossing to the north side of Fayette Street, and here again a desperate stand was made by the firemen. Again the fire leaped over the large building of Hall, Healding & Co., on the northwest corner of Charles Street. The explosion was successful in accomplishing the object, and the entire corner collapsed instantly, but this had apparently no effect upon the progress of the fire, for almost before the sound of the falling walls had died away the building on the east side of Charles Street began to blaze, and it

Awful Spectacle Seen From Belvedere Hotel

Whole Southern Horizon Seemed Involved
in a Vast, Immeasurable Sea of Flame,
Smoke and Steam.

BALTIMORE, Feb. 8.—As dusk came on last evening the spectacular splendor of the fire scene increased moment by moment. As one building after another was dynamited, great tongues of flame shot up into the air and mingled with the swirling clouds of smoke and steam, and showers of sparks were carried out in the swiftly moving currents of air, over vast areas, like myriads of shooting stars.

To the observers down in the crowded streets, near the fire lines, the whole of the southern horizon seemed involved in the vast, immeasurable sea of flame and smoke and steam. Only by those farther from the center of the city could the outlines of the flame-swept district be discerned.

Scene From Hotel.

Hundreds sought one point or another of vantage. And as the flames spread over the center of the city they were driven back, farther and farther. The Belvedere Hotel furnished the best viewpoint in the city, both from considerations of safety because of its distance from the fire and because of the location and height of the building. From the top floor of the hotel the threat of the city seemed in darkness, whose blackness was only emphasized

Buildings Dynamited TO CHECK FIRE SPREAD

Board of Estimates Gave Contract and Heroic Measures Were Taken Late in Afternoon.

BALTIMORE, Feb. 8.—The board of estimates, consisting of Mayor McLane, Building Inspector Preston, City Engineer Fendall, and Street Cleaning Commissioner Wickes, were on the scene about noon yesterday and held a meeting at the salvage corps building. It was then decided to dynamite the buildings on the outskirts of the fire.

They sent messengers in many quarters to obtain explosives, and finally secured the services of J. Henry Miller, who took the contract to blow up such structures the demolition of which promised to stay the progress of the flames. Special wagons were sent to haul the dynamite to the scene, and to P. Flannagan's quarry, and the dynamite was soon on the ground.

The dynamiting of the buildings to check the course of the fire eastward began at 5 o'clock. The suggestion that dynamite should be used was made by former Chief McAfee as early as 1 o'clock, before the buildings on Hanover Street had caught, but no effort to carry out this suggestion was made until later.

WATCHMAN IN A BANK SAW FIRE'S BEGINNING

Was Driven From Post With His Clothes Aflame.

BALTIMORE, Feb. 8.—John A. Conlan, watchman in the National Exchange Bank, Hopkins Place and German Street, is at the Maryland General Hospital, whether he was removed in the course of the fire. Conlan, whose home is at 2301 Pennsylvania Avenue, presented a pathetic picture, with his face, head, hands and arms covered with bandages.

Conlan was in the bank when the fire broke out in the warehouse of John E. Hurst & Co. Hearing the cries of fire he went to a window on the German Street side, where he saw flames coming from the top floor of the Hurst Building.

"In about a short time," he said, "the whole top of the building was enveloped in flames. Realizing that the fire might spread to our building I at once got down the hose which was in the building for use in case of fire. Before I was aware of it the flames were all over the building, but I was soon forced out of the banking room, opened the door on the Hopkins Place side and asked a fireman to come in to help me. He refused."

"By this time the interior of the room was aflame and I did not realize my perilous position until I felt heat upon my face. Then my clothing caught fire and I started to fly. I felt pretty bad, but I don't know whether I am very much hurt."

Dr. J. M. Delevett, the resident physician of the hospital, who dressed Conlan's burns, said: "Conlan is badly burned about the face and hands; no one can say just how badly. A great deal will depend upon developments. Unless something unforeseen should happen I think he will recover."

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Special Money-Saving Values In Metal Beds

It was evident that the block between Charles and St. Paul Streets was doomed.

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by the thousands of electric lights that marked the course of the streets and that glimmered and glistened in the gloom like brilliant jewels.

The tall buildings, like the Equitable, the Calvert, the Union Trust, the Fidelity Building, the Rembert, and the Young Men's Christian Association building, stood out against the brilliant background like grim barricades. Sharply etched against the sky gleamed the spires of Mount Vernon Place Church, of the Cathedral and of St. Alphonsus, and in the center of the terror-inspiring picture the monument, with the figure of Washington clearly outlined, was silhouetted blackly against the light.

Like Modern Nero.

Looking down into the street the eye was caught by the dull gleams reflected from the wet, shining streets. Then, upward again and in the line of vision came again the calm, placid figure crowning the monument. The figure fairly dominated the scene, and the fixed excitement of the marble was enough to excite a sort of a dumb rage in the breast of every bystander.

"The Father of His Country looks like Nero gloating over the destruction of several of his subjects," one observer remarked.

"All that he needs," his companion answered, "is a fiddle."

GOOD WORK WAS DONE BY WASHINGTON FIREMEN

Detective Sergeant C. A. Evans, who was one of the first of the Washington force to reach Baltimore, told of the good work done by Fire Chief Bell, and his men.

"Within a short time after the arrival of engine companies 3 and 6," said Sergeant Evans, "the Washington men were thrown into the very thickest of the fight."

"Number 5 was detailed to work in a ten-foot alley, where the flames were raging fiercely. With admirable skill they devoted their efforts to saving a few structures the demolition of which promised to stay the progress of the flames. They saved the building."

"The owner was so overjoyed that he insisted that the men should have a fight. I am sure that had it not been for your skill and daring my building would have been numbered among the ruined."

SENATOR ANKENY REAPPEARS IN CHAMBER

Senator Levi Ankeny of Washington today appeared in his seat for the first time since last December, when he went to his home in Walla Walla suffering from inflammatory rheumatism. The Senator's right hand is still so much swollen that he has to use the other member in shaking hands with his colleagues.

DEATH RECORD.

The following deaths have been reported to the Health Department for the forty-eight hours ended at noon today:

Bel, Charles E., 212 1/2 St. N. W.
Beyer, Benjamin V., 40, Govt. Hosp. Insane.
Coleman, Sarah, 22, 436 18th St. S. E.
Carr, Mary G., 5, 1235 6th Ave. S. E.
Duggan, William Joseph, 45, 713 R. I. Ave.
Dutch, Emma, 15, 30 Pierce St. N. W.
Hill, Mary H., 40, 2118 18th St. N. W.
Johnson, Alice, 72, 702 8th St. E. W.
Jordan, A. S., 65, 102 R. St. W. W.
Powell (or Powers), Henry, 64, Govt. Hosp. Insane.
Rogers, Mortimer F., 66, Govt. Hosp. Insane.
Stratton, Mary, 6, National Hotel, 8th St. Ext.
Thomas, James H., 38, 612 N. Y. Ave. N. W.
Thomas, William Bradley, 82, 915 16th St.
Thomas, Martha, 28, 334 Pennery St.
Whitten, Leander Morton, 28, 122 B St. N. E.
Whoy, Frederick, 1, 1388 5th St. N. W.

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